

**PROPOSED RESOLUTION OF WITNESS:
“Act With Justice and Righteousness”
A Call for Solidarity with the Persecuted in the Philippines, and an
End to Extra-Judicial Killings and other Human Rights Violations**

Submitted by: The Northern California Nevada Conference,
by action of the Conference Annual Meeting, May, 2007.

Submitted to the Office of General Ministries, May 29, 2007.

SUMMARY OF RESOLUTION

This Resolution calls upon the United Church of Christ—individual members, Local Churches, Conferences, and the Covenanted Ministries—to stand in prayer and solidarity with our sisters and brothers of the United Church of Christ Philippines, who are living in a culture of fear and intimidation for their embodiment of the Gospel; and to exercise all possible influence upon Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to end the terror and violence heretofore sanctioned by her regime and to hold the perpetrators accountable; to make the U.S. Congress aware of the significant link between United States financial support of “anti-terrorism” in the Philippines and the extra-judicial killings there; and to appeal to President George Bush to withdraw his support for a regime that tramples “the head of the poor into the dust of the earth.” [Amos 2: 7]

BACKGROUND

From 2001-2006, 836 “extra-judicial” killings occurred in the Philippines; 54 of the victims were children. 181 people have been forcibly abducted and remain missing. Among those killed are farmers, students, workers, community organizers, journalists and religious workers. Of the 27 religious workers killed, 16 were members of the United Church of Christ, Philippines.* All were unarmed civilians.

There is a pattern to the killings and forced disappearances.

- The victims are leaders or active members of groups advocating economic justice; or they are ordinary folk in areas where internal security operations are routine.
- Prior to the attacks, victims are usually subject to a vilification campaign by the military or anti-communist vigilante groups.
- Victims are usually subject to surveillance by the military or the intelligence network and told to stop “or else.”
- Killers are either uniformed men with no nametags, or motorcycle riders whose faces are covered with ski-masks.
- All cases remain unsolved, with no decisive action from authorities to investigate.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, ETHICAL RATIONALE; EXPECTED OUTCOME

We mourn this gross injustice and utter disregard for human rights! *We weep* at the violence committed with impunity and without accountability against the common folk, against people of faith. *We cry out to God* that justice may be done, just as the psalmist cried out:

Rise up, O Redeemer; O God, lift up Your hand;
 Do not forget the oppressed.
 Why do the vile scorn The Holy One
 And say in their hearts, “You will not hold us responsible”?
 But You do see! Indeed You take account of trouble and grief,
 That You may take it into Your hands;
 The helpless commit themselves to You;
 You have been the helper of the orphan.
 Break the grip of the tyrants and evildoers;
 Search out their corruption,
 Flush it out, until You find none left.
 It is The Most High who rules forever and ever;
 The nations shall wither away and perish from God’s land.
 O Redeemer, You will hear the desire of the lowly;
 You will make their hearts firm,
 You will listen and do justice for the vulnerable and the oppressed,
 So that mortals may bring terror no more. *Psalm 10: 12-18*

God takes the side of the poor and the oppressed. Yet, in January, 2007, the Philippine government allocated \$208 million for military hardware upgrades to combat insurgency, while basic medical care, public education, and gainful employment become ever less attainable by ordinary people. This funding was made possible through \$179.6 million from the United States Departments of State, Justice, and Defense for counter-terrorism, 2001-2004. [See GAO report, July, 2005]

Is the rash of unsolved murders since 2001 contingent with the availability of US funds to combat insurgency? Does the growing intensity of persecution reflect President Arroyo’s growing unpopularity and her desperation to retain power? Is it true, as Bishop Eliezer Pascua, General Secretary of the UCCP testified on March 14, 2007, before the U.S. Senate Sub-Committee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, that the church people who have been killed were killed “*because they have been actively involved in doing their task as servants of God...They were like modern day prophets whose commitment and service to God is seriously being carried out in journey with the poor people in their struggle for abundant life?*” We cannot conclude otherwise.

We call upon all people of faith to take God’s side. Like the prophet Jeremiah, let us go and prophesy,

Thus says the Holy One: Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, and say: Hear the word of the Most High, O King of Judah sitting on the throne of David—you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates. Thus says the Holy One: ***Act with justice and righteousness***, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place. For if you will indeed obey this word, then through the gates of this house shall enter kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their servants, and their people. But if you will not heed these words, I swear by myself, says the Almighty, that this house shall become a desolation.

Jeremiah 22: 1-5

Let us call upon President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and all authorities and agencies under her leadership to act with justice and righteousness and stop the summary executions and violence done to our brothers and sisters in the Philippines. Let the full weight of the law be upheld and make perpetrators be accountable.

Let us call upon our U.S. government agencies and elected representatives to rise up and decry the slaughter of innocents and denounce the culture of fear and intimidation that the Philippine government is tolerating or supporting.

Let us reach out in compassion and solidarity, with our ecumenical partners, to encourage our sisters and brothers of the UCCP, building networks of support and mission partnerships to help sustain their spirit, their lives, and their ministries of justice and reconciliation.

*Statistics cited by Bishop Pascua, March, 2007, and included in study materials from the UCCP, July 2007.

TEXT OF RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, More than 800 people have been murdered in extra-judicial killings in the Philippines over the past 5 years, and nearly 200 people have been forcibly abducted, with none of these cases solved;

AND WHEREAS, Those who have been killed or disappeared have been involved in work for economic and political justice within the legal framework, yet characterized by the Philippine government as *destabilizers* and *enemies of the state*;

AND WHEREAS, Our sisters and brothers of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, are subject, as are most of the citizens of the Philippines, to a culture of repression and terror, and additionally live and work with the awareness that 16 of the 27 religious workers killed to date [March, 2007] have been members of the UCCP;

AND WHEREAS, \$179.6 million has been provided by the U.S. government to the Philippines, from 2001-2004 “to equip security forces” [See GAO report, July, 2005] with then-assistant U.S. Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz referring to the Philippines as the “Second Front in the War on Terror” [See on-line *AsiaTimes*, May, 2003];

AND WHEREAS, in a country where basic needs for health care, public education, and gainful employment are neglected, the Philippine government has allocated \$208 million for military hardware upgrades to combat insurgency;

AND WHEREAS, As people of faith we cry out to the Most High to “*listen and do justice for the vulnerable and the oppressed, so that mortals may bring terror no more;*”

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT GENERAL SYNOD XXVI calls upon

The General Minister and President

- to ask individual members of the United Church of Christ, U.S.A., and Local Churches *to pray* for our partner church, the United Church of Christ, Philippines,

in this time of upheaval, and *to understand* and *be ultimately concerned* for the economic, political, and religious dynamics of the country;

- *to join* with our ecumenical partners in the United States *in denouncing* the extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances in the Philippines;
- *to call upon Philippines President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo* to stop the executions and violence and call the perpetrators into account under the law;
- *to call upon U.S. President George W. Bush* to reconsider his 2003 description of the Philippines as a “model of democracy” and to pursue the realization of democratic rule in the Philippines;
- to maintain supportive communication with the UCCP;

Wider Church Ministries

- to encourage mission partnerships between Conferences and the UCCP;
- to maintain supportive communication with the UCCP;
- to provide and disseminate information on the current state of the Philippines to Local Churches & Conferences;

Justice & Witness Ministries

- to call upon U.S. government agencies and elected representatives to examine the links between U.S. funds and the violence and repression in the Philippines;
- to identify, through Justice and Peace Network communications, legislators who could be called upon to provide leadership in addressing policy and funding issues pertinent to the violations of human rights in the Philippines;

Conferences

- to express support and solidarity with the members of the UCCP in living out Jesus Christ’s Gospel message, particularly in promoting economic justice. (Luke 4:18-19);
- to establish linkages (dialogue, conversations, programs, etc.) toward mission partnerships with the UCCP.